

Concurrent Session J
Wednesday 2 September
1.55pm – 2.45pm



Session 4
Australia 2030- The Lucky country or the Plucky Country?
Mark Brodsky, Margaret Ruwoldt
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This conversation tackles a topic no less important than the long term future of higher education in Australia and its affect in turn on Australia as a nation. This topic is important now because most of the discussion around higher education is at present focussed on the near term issue of deregulation, which while important is a local issue that will in time become less relevant than the global factors that will affect higher education in Australia. The key question that I wish to explore is whether in fact higher education has a future in the Australia of 2030, what that future might be if it does, and what we need to start doing if we are to ensure this success.

In the context of the conference theme of leadership, I feel there is no more relevant topic. We need to lead now as individuals, as institutions, and as a sector if we are to set ourselves up for a bright future. The presentation will take the form of a speculative view of how the next 15 years will progress in a tale of two countries – Australia the “lucky country” and Australia the “plucky country”. Along the way we will explore key factors that underlie our current higher education business model, look at some key literature about the current and future state of higher education, and some options for what we might do about one or more of these futures. Some of the topics we will cover include: why we attract students, research funding, and good researchers and staff? What difference does the form of learning make (eg online, blended, on campus)? What else does globalisation enable in for example research collaboration and institutional reputation? What would it take to disrupt our existing model and how quickly could it happen? Are some institutions better placed to survive and thrive than others?

The topic will deliberately take the form of a conversation – while I will present some thoughts and ideas, I would very much value a lively conversation around what we might do to ensure this better future.